ENDURING MYTHS OF ORIENTALISM

BOOK REVIEW BY G.F. HADDAD (LONG VERSION)

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THE ORAL AND THE WRITTEN IN EARLY ISLAM. **By Gregor Schoeler.** Translated by Uwe Vegelpohl. Edited by James E. Montgomery. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Pp. viii+248. ISBN10: 0-415-39495-3. ISBN13: 978-0-415-39495-6 (HB).

This is a translation of the following six German articles written by Gregor Schoeler, the chair of Islamic studies at the University of Basel, in the eighties and nineties and herein updated by the author through footnotes and addenda:

o "The transmission of the sciences in early Islam: oral or written?" (1985)
o "The transmission of the sciences in early Islam revisited" (1989)
o "Writing and publishing: on the use and function of writing in early Islam" (1992)
o "Oral poetry theory and Arabic literature" (1981)
o "Oral Torah and *Ḥadīth*: transmission, prohibition of writing, redaction" (1989)
o "Who is the author of *Kitāb al-ᶜayn*?" (2000)

The book benefits from a long introduction by the editor, the University of Cambridge's James E. Montgomery, which contains a useful overview of Orientalist reference-works and editions in the various Islamic sciences, although marred by inaccuracies which we discuss below.

There is now general acceptance that the writing of hadith in the earliest period was a widespread fact in practice but controversy abounds over the exact role of writing in the period immediately preceding the composition of the canons, roughly, the Hijrī years 100-200. Schoeler debunks the myth of mutual exclusivity in that period and demonstrates complementarity, as summarized in two sentences of his:

> On closer inspection, it seems as if oral and written transmission, instead of being mutually exclusive, supplemented each other.... It might be best entirely to avoid catchphrases such as "written transmission" versus "oral transmission" and to talk about lecture and teaching practices in early Islam [instead].[1]

In the process Schoeler supports, against Goldziher – whose errors Schoeler says "manifestly exerted considerable influence on the theories of subsequent Orientalists"[2] – a generally much earlier dating of the written material circulating in more or less restricted scholarly circles in hadith, fiqh, historical, philological, and other disciplines prior to the first great "published" third-century compilations in each of those fields.

Some examples of pre-canonical literature, though not necessarily the earliest works, would be the extant large *muṣannaf* of ᶜAbd al-Razzaq (d. 211) in ḥadīth or the *Musnad* of Khalaf ibn Khalīfa al-Kūfī (d. 131)[3]; in lexicography, al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Baṣrī's (d. between 160-175) extant eight-volume *Kitāb al-ᶜAyn*, "the first and oldest dictionary of the Arabic language written in Arabic"; in history, Ibn Isḥāq's (d. 150) lost *al-Kitāb al-Kabīr*; in the canonical readings *(qirā'āt)*, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's (d. 110) manual, etc.

In practice, the debate is not so much about writing/not writing but about the preferable learning method of material which must truthfully and imperatively be transmitted. Scholars who wrote did so for memorization as a prerequisite for trustworthiness, while those who avoided writing did so, in most cases, only insofar as they relied on their memorization. Countless reports show that the aural environment of the transmission of knowledge went without saying even as the floodgates of written material had long been thrown wide open, as illustrated by the report of the Madinan Makhrama ibn Bukayr (d. 159) who "brought out writings (*kutuban*, notes, notebooks, written records) and said: 'These are the writings of my father and I have not heard any of them' *(hādhihi kutubu abī wa-lam asmaᶜ minhā shay'ā)*".[4]

[1] Schoeler (p. 41).
[2] Schoeler (p. 175 n. 83).
[3] In Ibn Hajar, *Taqrīb* (§1731).
[4] In al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (Nadwī ed. 8:16), Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt* (7:510 §11220).

Indeed, the Qur'ān itself, although the Written Book par excellence, is named "Lectionary" because it is meant to be recited out loud. Thus, "Book and recitation, written and oral transmission, are but two aspects of one revelation."[5] Further, the written is meant to support the oral as a prop and it is the oral which constitutes the proof, not vice versa as may be misassumed in modern culture. Commenting on Sūra 2:282, al-Ṭaḥāwī writes in his *Kitāb al-Surūṭ al-Kabīr*:

> Allāh, the Sublime and Exalted, decrees the recording of debts in writing. [...] He then clarifies what He intends [...]: "In this way, [in the sight of Allāh],[6] it is ensured that you act justly and that your testimony is true, and (in this way it is) most likely that (later) you will not have doubts (about the testimony of the witnesses)" (2:282). Thus, he lets them know that in written recording, there is *support for the (oral) testimony (qiwām al-shahāda)*, by which the creditor's funds *(māl al-ṭālib)* are exactly determined and in which the debt of the debtor *(dayn al-maṭlūb)* is defined.[7]

The reasons for the prohibition of writing hadith in Islam, as summed up by Schoeler[8] after the Ulema and the Orientalists, can be further refined and illustrated thus:

(a) There was fear, in the earliest time of Islam only, of admixture of non-Qur'anic material into the Qur'an itself, although even then the writing of hadith was widespread; moreoever, this reason had become obsolete even before the ʿUthmānic codex became law.

(b) There was fear of (1) distraction by, and (2) scripturalization of other than the Divine Book, as the Jews and Christians had done with their Dispensations; this reason culminated in the incident of the Caliph ʿUmar reportedly gathering the people's written hadiths as so many "self-inflicted burdens" *(al-gharmā')* – in the words of al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad (d. 106) – and "tearing them up or burning them,"[9] exclaiming: "A Mishna like the Mishna of the Israelites *(mathnātun ka-mathnāti ahl al-kitāb)*!"[10] This fear had become almost obsolete by the end of the time of the Companions.[11] In any case, Schoeler and the commonality of the Orientalists do not sufficiently stress that there was never any question hadith had to be known and transmitted.

(c) There was fear of memory loss caused by overreliance on writing, a purely technical concern of especial relevance in pristine Arabic culture in the first couple of centuries.

(d) There was fear that written records could fall into the wrong hands and be misused by the heterodox and the laity – as well, perhaps, as the post-*rāshida* caliphal authorities – instead of remaining the exclusive province of the scholarly community (particularly the Sunni scholars) alone, undoubtedly the most widespread concern of all.

(e) There was – and remains to this day – profound suspicion of knowledge obtained merely through books at the expense of physical encounter and scholarly companionship without which both memorization and comprehension prove defective. This included book-bound Qur'ān memorizers, let alone students of other disciplines.

(f) There was fear of freezing material (particularly unrevealed material such as *fiqh*), into an unduly authoritative form, both losing the opportunity to refine and correct it, and risking the incurrence of sin through the misguidance of others in case of error. Imām Aḥmad wrote ḥadīth but would not hear of compiling his *fiqh*.

With regard to hadith transmission, Schoeler's main point is that opposition to writing was mostly not against writing itself but against the public use of written records, most notably among the Basrian scholars, whose majority lectured from memory although their own written records did exist and among whom were those, like Muʿāwiya ibn Qurra (d. 113), who considered that whoever did not write down ḥadīth could not be considered a scholar.[12] In such a context, the first two of the above

[5] Schoeler (p. 75).
[6] The original translation is bizarre: "In this way, God thinks,..."!
[7] In Schoeler (p. 82), citing our teacher the late Jeannette Wakin's translation (which I slightly edited) in her *Function of Documents in Islamic Law: The Chapter on Sales from Ṭaḥāwī's Kitāb al-Shurūṭ al-Kabīr* (Albany, NY, 1972), p. 1.
[8] Schoeler (p. 117-121).
[9] Abū Zurʿa, *Tārīkh* (p. 363 §785).
[10] Ibn Saʿd (5:288) cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* and *Tārīkh al-Islām* in the chapters of al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr. See also Cook, *Opponents* (p. 472 §63 and p. 502-503 §127-128).
[11] See our remarks on Ibn ʿUlayya's incident further down.
[12] In al-Khaṭīb, *Taqyīd al-ʿIlm* (ʿAṣriyya ed. p. 110-111 §231-232).

were historically the lesser reasons and were the first to become irrelevant. It the last four reasons that really mattered the most in the pre-canonical period under scrutiny.

Even more illustrative of this aural-literate culture than what Schoeler cites is the anecdote Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrates in his *Muqaddima*:

> I heard my father say: We visited Mālik ibn Saᶜd the paternal first cousin of Rawḥ ibn ᶜUbāda (d. 205) in al-Baṣra and said: "Bring out some of your ḥadīth for us," so he would bring out two or three fascicles at a time. We said to him: "Bring out for us a saddlebag's worth of books so we can peruse them *(akhrij ilaynā mil'a juwāliqin kutuban ḥattā nanẓuru fīhā)*." So the shaykh brought out a saddlebag's worth of books that were behind him and put them down before us. We wrote a lot of hadiths from them. Later, I took some twenty fascicles' worth of the compilations of Rawḥ and others and said: "May I borrow [lit. 'carry it away'] that and peruse it?" He replied: "Borrow it and let me fix a time I shall come to your house and narrate [it] to you." I did so and he came, but something happened and I was delayed with another shaykh while he sat there waiting for us. He waited for us almost until the time of *ẓuhr*, at which time we arrived and gave him some writings from which he narrated to us.[13]

Schoeler correctly labels as "highly laudatory topoi" the reports about Ibn Abī ᶜArūba, Wakīᶜ, al-Thawrī (of phenomenal memory), and other Irāqīs never holding a book nor writing.[14] "Saᶜīd ibn Abī ᶜArūba is reported to have had his own scribe by the name of ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ᶜAṭā', who accompanied him everywhere and wrote his books."[15] The Kufan master ᶜĀmir al-Shaᶜbī (d. 104) said: "I never wrote anything black on white, nor asked anyone ever to say a ḥadīth twice."[16] The second half of the statement explains the first and indirectly confirms that the principal function of writing was mnemonic. Its continuation adds: "And I forgot an amount the like of which one who remembered it would be considered a *ᶜālim*." Such boasts indeed only make sense in a context where the concurrency of note-writing with didactic lecturing is a fact of life. More importantly, Schoeler shows there is no contradiction in diametrically opposite reports that they actually "wrote down, collected, and systematically arranged" hadith, as Ibn Ḥibbān said of Wakīᶜ.[17]

We may add that Wakīᶜ himself declared, "Whoever leaves his house and goes to the gathering of a *muḥaddith* without an inkwell intends to beg."[18] Al-Thawrī's books were commonly cited in the generations after him, among them his lost encyclopedic *Jāmiᶜ* regrouping at least 30,000 narrations and which Yaḥyā ibn Maᶜīn said Zayd ibn Abī al-Zarqā' had in his possession.[19] Ibn Abī ᶜArūba was famous as "the first compiler of the *Sunan* in al-Baṣra,"[20] and "the first with Ibn Jurayj to have composed books" according to Imam Aḥmad,[21] among them Qatāda's *Tafsīr*,[22] as well as "the second after al-Rabīᶜ ibn Ṣubayḥ (d. 160) to have compiled *fiqh* in al-Baṣra."[23]

The notes were meant as private mnemonic aides or, as Schoeler labels them, *hypomnēmata*, in a constant flux of revision, addition, subtraction, correction, and improvement whether by their original or subsequent owners, or accidental readers, or the poetry transmitter *rāwiya* Schoeler investigates at length in "Writing and Publishing in Islam,"[24] in contradistinction to *syngrammata* or redacted works prepared for final publication. This distinction, Schoeler feels, is "for the most part not fully

[13]Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ wal-Taᶜdīl* (1:361-362).
[14]Schoeler (p. 31, 115).
[15]Schoeler (p. 115), citing Ibn Saᶜd's *Ṭabaqāt* and Ibn Hajar's *Tahdhīb*.
[16]In Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiᶜ Bayān al-ᶜIlm* (Zuhayrī ed. 1:289)
[17]Schoeler (p. 31).
[18]In al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jāmiᶜ li-Akhlāq al-Rāwī wa-Ādāb al-Sāmiᶜ* (ᶜAjāj ed. 2:269 §1608).
[19]Al-Dhahabī's *Siyar* under Zayd ibn Abī al-Zarqā'.
[20]Ibn Abī Ḥātim in the introduction to *al-Jarḥ wal-Taᶜdīl*, al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 6:413), *Tadhkira* (1:177, 1:203...), Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb* (Fikr ed. 6:358), etc.
[21]Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 6:327).
[22]Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 6:417).
[23]Al-Rāmahurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-Fāṣil* (§892), completing the list with "Khālid ibn Jumayl in al-Baṣra, Maᶜmar ibn Rāshid 'abroad,' (*ẓāhiran*), Ibn Jurayj in Makka, then Sufyān al-Thawrī in al-Kūfa, Ḥammād ibn Salama al-Baṣra, then Sufyān ibn ᶜUyayna in Makka, al-Walīd ibn Muslim in Shām, Jarīr ibn ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd in Rayy, ᶜAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak in Khurāsān, Hushaym ibn Bashīr in Wāsiṭ, then Ibn Abī Zā'ida, Ibn Fuḍayl, and Wakīᶜ in al-Kūfa, then ᶜAbd al-Razzāq 'abroad' and Abū Qurra Musā ibn Ṭāriq, while Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shayba singled himself out in al-Kūfa for the abundance of his chapters, the quality of his organization, and the excellence of his composition." Both al-Rāmahurmuzī in the *Muḥaddith al-Fāṣil* and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in the introduction to *al-Jarḥ wal-Taᶜdīl* relate that ᶜAlī ibn al-Madīnī listed "among the people of al-Baṣra who composed books are Shuᶜba ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Ibn Abī ᶜArūba, Ḥammād ibn Salama, Abū ᶜAwāna, and Maᶜmar ibn Rāshid, and among the people of al-Kūfa Sufyān al-Thawrī, and among the people of Shām al-Awzāᶜī, and among the people of Wāsiṭ Hushaym." That al-Awzāᶜī composed books from the narrations of Ibn Abī Kathīr is confirmed by no less than ᶜAbd al-Razzāq cf. al-Khaṭīb, *Jāmiᶜ* (§1857).
[24]Schoeler (p. 65-69).

recognized and consequently not sufficiently taken into account" by Fuat Sezgin in his *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. "Part of the blame for the ensuing confusion has to rest with the Arabic terminology, which calls everything written a *kitāb*, whether it be scattered notes or edited books."[25]

Some notes, perhaps the exception which proved the rule, could reach such a finished state as to make them apt candidates for publication and canonization, as in the incident related about Shuᶜba's student, the Basrian Ghundar (d. 193), by his Iraqi students

(i) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal: "Ghundar brought out for us his book [of notes taken] from Sufyān ibn ᶜUyayna and said: 'See if you can find any mistake in it!' and he threw it over to us,"[26] and

(ii) Yaḥyā ibn Maᶜīn: "Ghundar brought out for us some kind of Taylasi travel-bag containing the hadith of Ibn ᶜUyayna. Khalaf al-Makhramī perused them and we perused them, looking hard for any mistake that we might find. They would have all loved to find a mistake! But they found none."[27]

Although some teachers ostensibly forbade note-taking, students may well have taken extensive notes from teachers who themselves did not literally write. To the examples Schoeler mentions we might add al-Ājurrī's narration, in his *Questions to Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī*, that the Basrian Yaḥyā ibn Saᶜīd al-Qaṭṭān reported that his Kūfan teacher Zakariyyā ibn Abī Zā'ida (d. 184) – both of them, like the latter's teacher al-Shaᶜbī, supposed enemies of writing – "brought out to me al-Shaᶜbī's book, so I copied some of it, then he brought out to me other books which I returned without taking anything from them: the book of [the Madinan] Saᶜd ibn Ibrāhīm (d. 125) and the book of [the Kufan] Firās [ibn Yaḥyā] (d. 129)."[28]

Schoeler insists on Fuat Sezgin's "clearcut dichotomy between author [*i.e.* collector or compiler] and transmitter" as "impracticable" because, in the pre-canonical period and until the 3rd and 4th centuries, "most transmitters added to or subtracted from works they transmitted or modified them in some other way.... Nowadays, we know that up to the third and the fourth centuries, authors and transmitters are often indistinguishable."[29]

However, the problem is that Sezgin's dichotomy is not inclusive enough, not in the dichotomy itself. In the two examples he himself gives, Schoeler shows that the German specialists of Mujāhid's *Tafsīr*[30] and al-Azraqī's *Akhbār Makka*[31] did a pretty good job of pinpointing the authorial contribution of precise transmitters, actually widening Sezgin's narrow standard rather than disproving it. There are ḥadīth transmitters who are closer, in terms of knowledge, to the compilers' caliber described in the texts as "lucid" *(min ahl al-baṣīra)* and "analytical" *(min al-nuqqād)*. Such an intermediate category of *critical transmitters* narrate with an eye for an original design of substance (*e.g. fiqh*) or standard (*e.g.* authenticity) legible to posterity as being *also theirs*, a typical case being Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan's *Muwaṭṭa'*.

On certain points, Schoeler himself remains inside the type of either/or frame he problematizes, for example, when he writes:

> Besides dictations, lectures intended "only" to be listened to were another regular feature of teaching practice in early Islam. Even in these "pure" *samāᶜ* presentations, some students occasionally took notes. This was tolerated by some teachers, frowned on by others. (Footnote: al-Khaṭīb's *Kifāya* and *Taqyīd al-ᶜIlm*.). Therefore, it was not strictly necessary to have written records in order to transmit material. According to traditionist literature, students in this situation used to concentrate fully in the presence of the teacher on memorizing the subject matter taught during lectures. Afterwards, they quizzed each other abouth the lecture's contents and finally recorded it at home for future reference. (Footnote: *Taqyīd al-ᶜIlm* and Nadia Abbott.)[32]

How many times have we been told by our teachers "drop the pen and listen attentively?" "Did you come to listen or to copy?" al-Ḥusayn ibn Samᶜūn asks one of his students; "imagine as if the

[25] Schoeler (p. 79). Cook still falls into the very same confusion cf. his *Opponents of Writing* (p. 465 n. 233).
[26] In ᶜAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, *ᶜIlal* (1:305 §514).
[27] In al-Dūrī, *Tārīkh Ibn Maᶜīn* (4:245 §4178).
[28] In al-Ājurrī, *Su'ālāt al-Ājurrī Abā Dāwūd al-Sijistānī* (Madīna ed. p. 184).
[29] Schoeler (p. 36, 39).
[30] Stauth (1969) and Leemhuis (1981), "working independently of one another."
[31] Wüstenfeld (1858).
[32] Schoeler (p. 32).

Messenger of Allāh, upon him blessings and peace, is sitting and we are listening to his hadith!"[33] Al-Wāqidī said of Imām Mālik: "His reader would read for all, and no one looked into his own book, nor asked questions, out of awe before Mālik and out of respect for him."[34] In such gatherings, the hadith was being read to the teacher from a written text, and writing was ubiquitous. If such evidence confirms, as Schoeler points out, that students were expected to pay undivided attention, it does not confirm his (otherwise correct) contention that "it was not strictly necessary to have written records in order to transmit material," especially for those such as Mālik, who would not hear of *samā*ᶜ over *ᶜarḍ*, or Aḥmad, for whom a teacher without a book was an unreliable teacher. "I never saw my father narrate other than from a book, save less than a hundred hadiths," his son tells us.[35]

Another either/or inaccuracy is Schoeler's statement about certain reports, "These traditions can be recognized by an *isnād* displaying an introductory terminology which indicates 'oral' transmission (*ḥaddathanī*, 'he told me'; or *akhbaranī*, 'he reported', etc.)."[36] In fact, ḥadīth literature contains countless occurrences of *akhbara* in a sense that excludes oral transmission and even physical encounter, as "*akhbaranī* can be used in the wider sense and figuratively to refer to handover *(munāwala)*, permission *(ijāza)*, and correspondence *(mukātaba)*."[37] Ibn al-Najjār related that Abū Nuᶜaym even used *haddathanā* that way at times.[38] And what does Schoeler's "etc." stand for? Even *shāfahanī* has often been used in reference to mere permission to narrate, not narrative audition.

Schoeler fails to identify certain points of muḥaddith ethics subsumed under the headings he investigates. The first point is that rigorous teachers often filtered out students, as in the following reports by Imām al-Shāfiᶜī:

> I read out the *Muwaṭṭa'* to Mālik, and none would read out to Mālik but those who had understood the Science and sat with its people. I had studied with Ibn ᶜUyayna.[39]
>
> Ibn Sīrīn, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaᶜī, Ṭāwūs, and others of the Successors preferred not to accept hadith other than from someone trustworthy who knew what he was narrating and had memorized it; I have not seen any hadith specialist who contradicted that school.[40]

In the latter report, the concentration of names famed as anti-writing proponents shows that the critics of the writing of hadith were not concerned with writing as reprehensible in itself so much as with the writer as possibly weak in his *fiqh*, memory, or religion. They themselves might have written and produced books even in the *syngrammata* sense, as reported about Imām al-Awzāᶜī (d. 158), although he also said: "This science used to be noble, men would transmit it to one another, but when it spread to books, those other than its rightful custodians became involved with it."[41]

The second point is that teachers were wary of worldly-minded *samā*ᶜ-seekers, as illustrated by the report of Jāmiᶜ ibn Shaddād: "I saw Ḥammād [ibn Abī Sulaymān] writing before Ibrāhīm [al-Nakhaᶜī] wearing an *anbajānī*, saying: 'I swear by Allāh that I am not seeking the world through it.'"[42]

A mercantile mentality is something we unfortunately see revived today in the form of *ijāza*-hunters in the Arab and Muslim worlds, to whom al-Dhahabī's scathing judgment of the *muḥaddithūn* 700 years ago applies in full:

> Most of them do not understand anything and they have no drive toward knowing hadith or applying it... rather, their energies consist in audition with the most ignorant teachers and the multiplication of monographs and narration. They do not polish their manners with the manners of hadith and they do not wake up from the drunkenness of *samā*ᶜ. Now he hears the booklet and already his ego is telling him: when will I narrate it? In 50 years, perhaps? Woe to you!.... He is excused, Sufyān al-Thawrī, when he said: If hadith were something good it would have disappeared just as everything good has disappeared.[43]

[33] In al-Khaṭīb, *Kifāya* (Hāshim ed. p. 88).
[34] In al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 8:65).
[35] *Siyar* (Fikr ed. 9:457).
[36] Schoeler (p. 38).
[37] Al-Khaṭīb, *Kifāya* (Hāshim ed. p. 401).
[38] In al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-Mughīth*, section on *munāwala* and *ijāza*.
[39] In al-Simᶜānī, *Adab al-Imlā' wal-Istimlā'* (Weisweiler Beirut repr. p. 95).
[40] In Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, introduction.
[41] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 7:114). Schoeler cites a different wording.
[42] In al-Khaṭīb, *Taqyīd al-ᶜIlm* (ᶜAṣriyya ed. p. 111 §233).
[43] Al-Dhahabī, *Bayān Zaghl al-ᶜIlm wal-Ṭalab* (Kawtharī ed. p. 6). Of course, nowadays, they do not even obtain *samā*ᶜ but, as soon as they obtain the *ijāza*, run away in search of another. Their first words are invariably "Who do you narrate from?

Such intentions disqualify the students, as al-Khaṭīb shows in the very first chapter of his large *Jāmiᶜ li-Akhlāq al-Rāwī wa-Ādāb al-Sāmiᶜ* ("Encyclopedia of the Morals of the Ḥadīth Narrator and the Manners of the Auditor"), which Schoeler did not include in the materials covered.

Particularly interesting to this reviewer are Schoeler's evaluation of the anti-writing ḥadīth as "most probably never spoken by the Prophet," upon him blessings and peace, and his treatment of the account that "al-Zuhrī (d. 120), commissioned by the Umayyads, was the first to codify traditions in writing *(tadwīn)* on a large scale" as "decisive fact"[44] although Ibn Isḥāq also used, among his main sources, the *Maghāzī* and *Manāqib al-aāba* of ᶜĀṣim ibn ᶜUmar ibn Qatāda ibn al-Nuᶜmān al-Anṣārī's (d. 120 or 129), and the compilations of Abān ibn ᶜUthmān ibn ᶜAffān (d. 105) and ᶜAbd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn ᶜAmr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī's (d. 135), all of them preceded by the undoubted *tadwīn* of ᶜUrwa ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-ᶜAwwām (d. ~92-95) which he ordered burnt, after a lifetime of teaching from them, during the sack of Madīna by the armies of Syro-Palestine under Yazīd ibn Muᶜāwiya in 63.

Finally, there is Schoeler's subscription to eight Enduring Myths of Orientalism (EMO):

EMO (1): Mythicization and typecasting. Schoeler refers to the rightly-guided Caliph ᶜUmar as "an inveterate opponent not only of the written, but also of the oral dissemination of ḥadīth..."[45] at which point we have practically left the realm of scholarship for that of the fabulous. Statements that Ibn ᶜUlayya and Saᶜīd ibn Abī ᶜArūba are "of Qadarite persuasion" while "Kūfa and Madīna... were strongly influenced by Shīᶜite factions"[46] lead us to wonder whether we are reading the same books or speaking of the same places! In his 1997 *Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islām*, Cook's scenarios of ḥadīth transmission as the geopolitical agenda of narrators with ulterior motives and "contamination" techniques at times read like John Le Carré.[47]

Both Schoeler and, in his wake, Cook slur the incident of Ibn ᶜUlayya's (d. 194) reaction, related by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, at the mention of the famous ḥadīth of ᶜAmr ibn Shuᶜayb from ᶜAbd Allāh ibn ᶜAmr on the Prophetic permission to write down ḥadīth, whereupon Ibn ᶜUlayya "shook his garments and repeatedly sought refuge in Allāh from lying and liars." While chuckling that Ibn ᶜUlayya "became enraged about a Meccan Prophetic tradition,"[48] Schoeler overlooks what Aḥmad himself pointed out, namely, that Ibn ᶜUlayya – of phenomenal memory – championed the oralist school of his Basrian teachers, as indicated by Aḥmad's explanation to his son who had asked: "He seems to have gainsayed ᶜAmr ibn Shuᶜayb?" Aḥmad replied: "He definitely did narrate and transmit from him; however, the position *(madhhab)* of Ibn Sīrīn, Ayyūb, and Ibn ᶜAwn is that they did not write." At best, Ibn ᶜUlayya's reaction was deliberate didacticism with a touch of archaism on his part while, at worst, it was school partisanship, as al-Khaṭīb comments.[49]

EMO (2): Israelism among other false etiologies. Although he states, "Undoubtedly, the Islamic (religious) teaching system grew spontaneously, without outside interference, out of the need to teach the new religion," Schoeler limits this to the Prophetic period. Thereafter, things promptly dilute into wildly hypothetical hybrids:

> During the time in which this simple teaching (but not yet transmission) method was developed into the Islamic ḥadīth system, outside influences could easily have left their imprint. These could have been Arabic, for example, the model provided by the transmission of poetry, as well as external, thath is, Jewish tradition and the late antique school system (not so much Alexandria itself as Hellenistic teaching practices in Syria and Persia). The mediators were probably *mawālī* (clients) familiar with Hellenistic teaching methods.[50]

How many *ijāza*s do you have?"

[44] Schoeler (p. 123).

[45] "... Thus, he is said to have banned the dissemination of a saying of the Prophet confirmed by numerous Companions, because this would have restricted his freedom of action in a certain matter." Schoeler (p. 120), citing Ibn Saᶜd, Goldziher.

[46] Schoeler (p. 127).

[47] Michael Cook, *The Opponents of the Writing of Ḥadīth in Early Islām*, in *Arabica: Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 44 (4), October 1997, p. 437-530.

[48] Schoeler (p. 126) cf. Cook, "the anger of Ibn ᶜUlayya" in the table of contents of his *Opponents of Writing*.

[49] In Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *ᶜIlal* (p. 108-109), ᶜAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, *ᶜIlal* (1:244), and al-Khaṭīb, *Taqyīd* (ᶜAṣriyya ed. p. 79 §138).

[50] Schoeler (p. 48).

Schoeler does not cite a single illustration of who he might mean by that supposed Judaic or Hellenistic type of ḥadīth teacher other than signing off with the footnote: "The Jewish influence on the Islamic ḥadīth system needs to be researched in greater detail" [!].

Similar Israelism looms in Schoeler's irresolute questioning of J. Horovitz's 1918 representation of the Jewish documentation of transmission chains in the Talmudic (Amoraean) era as "the model for the Islamic *isnād*" and his imprudent embrace of Juynboll's "second Islamic civil war" dating of the "emergence of *isnād*":

> Thanks to Juynboll's (1983) study of the Islamic tradition, we now know that the use of *isnād*s probably emerged during the second Islamic civil war (61-73).[51] At this time, there would have been enough Jewish converts familiar with the system of authentication employed in the Talmud (which by that time had definitely been redacted in written form) who could have introduced it into Islamic transmission. [!] It is more likely, however, that what we have here is a parallel development in both cultures.[52]

Michael Cook in his *Opponents of the Writing of Tradition* embraces Horovitz's etiology but the scanty, pitch-dark, and Mathusalean chains adduced hardly illustrate a "development" of *isnād* in the Jewish world itself, even less "a parallel development in both cultures," and yet less "a Jewish borrowing at the root of Muslim Tradition." Compare this *takhbīṭ* with Alois Sprenger's implicit confession of the unique originality of *isnād* in Islam in the preface to the 1853-1864 Calcutta edition of Ibn Hajar's *Isāba*: "There has not been in the past any nations, just as there is no nation today, that has achieved what the Muslims have achieved in the great, vital science of biography, which covers the states of 500,000 people and their activities." The same Sprenger in 1869 "already saw matters in a clearer light than later scholars. He writes: 'We have to distinguish between aides-mémoires, lecture notebooks and published books.'"[53]

EMO (3): Historico-literary misrepresentation. Schoeler's assertion that Mālik "did not give the *Muwaṭṭa'* a final shape; he did not establish a 'canonical' version on which the various recensions which have reached us could have been based. In fact, they... show a high degree of variation."[54] This Goldzihrian-Schachtian error was put to rest in Nazīr Ḥamdān's *al-Muwaṭṭa'āt* (which builds on the studies of Ibn ᶜĀshūr, al-Lacknawī, Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr, and al-Dāraquṭnī among others) and the works of Azami, Dutton and others,[55] which showed that the degree of variation was minimal but for Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan's aptly titled *Muwaṭṭa' Muḥammad*, which is actually "an amalgamation of the ḥadīth of the Ḥijāzīs with the *fiqh* and *athar* of the Iraqis and is a work of comparative *fiqh*"[56] – the classic exception that confirms the rule.

As for whether Mālik established canonicity or not it suffices, in all fairness, to hear him describe it: "I showed my book to seventy jurists of Madīna, and every single one of them approved me for it *(kulluhum wāṭa'anī ᶜalayh)*, so I named it 'The Approved,'" which his student al-Shāfiᶜī hailed as "the soundest book on earth after the Qur'ān," "the nearest book on earth to the Qur'ān," "the most correct book on earth after the Qur'ān," and "the most beneficial book on earth after the Qur'ān" according to four separate narrations. It hardly gets more canonical! However, Mālik was a perfectionist who refused to let go. "May Allāh have mercy on Mālik – how severe his examination of ḥadīth narrators was!" lamented Ibn ᶜUyayna,[57] while ᶜĀtiq al-Zubayrī quipped "Had Mālik lived longer he would have dropped the totality of the narrations from the *Muwaṭṭa'*."[58]

EMO (4): Under-valorisation. Schoeler and the commonality of Orientalists heretofore fail to stress two major points. First, there was never at any point any question ḥadīth had to be known, memorized, applied authoritatively, and transmitted as explicitly commanded in the Qur'ān and Sunna. The failure to stress this stems from a principled Orientalist obfuscation of the fact that, whether written or not, probative ḥadīth is, in Islam, from the Prophetic times through Ibn Naṣr al-Marwazī's *Kitāb al-Sunna* and al-Shāfiᶜī's *Risāla*, nothing short of extra-Qur'anic Revelation or *waḥī ghayr matlūw*. Witness this passage from Montgomery's introduction, quoting Schoeler, which

[51]See the section entitled "*Isnād*-criticism of the first four Caliphs" in our *Sunna Notes I* (2005) for evidence that the *isnād* emerged from the earliest times possible.
[52]Schoeler (p. 113, cf. p. 42).
[53]Schoeler (p. 176 n. 100).
[54]Schoeler (p. 33).
[55]Cf. www.islamic-awareness.org/Hadith/muwatta.html as of July 2004, last perused April 2007.
[56]Ḥamdān, *al-Muwaṭṭa'āt lil-Imām Mālik Raḍiya Allāhu ᶜanh* (Damascus and Beirut: Dār al-Qalam and al-Dār al-Shāmiyya, 1992), p. 96.
[57]In Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr, *al-Intiqā'* (Abū Ghudda ed. p. 52).
[58]In ᶜIyāḍ, *Tartīb al-Madārik* (Morocco ed. 2: 73).

actually "disappears" the Sunna as non-revealed material, positing only Qur'ān on the one hand and, on the other, *fiqh* and *ijtihād*:

> But whence these protestations, why the aversion [against writing], and why the valorisation of memory? Veneration of the Qur'ān is the principal explanation adduced, among several others – a reluctance to acknowledge the authority of a written corpus tantamount to the divine Revelation, combined with a desire to reserve for scholars the right to avail themselves of "the opportunity to modify, accommodate and, if necessary, to change, indeed even to abrogate certain rules," in other words, to preserve and maintain a living tradition.[59]

Second, all but al-Qāsīm ibn Muḥammad, among the figures most famously known for their opposition to writing, whether Abū Saᶜīd al-Khudrī, Ibn Masᶜūd, Abū Mūsā al-Ashᶜarī, Zayd ibn Thābit, Ibn ᶜUmar, Abū Hurayra, Ibn ᶜAbbās, Anas, Ṭāwūs, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, Mujāhid, ᶜUrwa, al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, Saᶜīd ibn al-Musayyab, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaᶜī, al-Aᶜmash, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ayyūb al-Sakhtyānī, Ibn ᶜAwn, or others such as Ibn ᶜUlayya, Ibn Abī Dhi'b, and Ibn ᶜUyayna, are on record as writing ḥadīth or supporting its writing[60] – and, even of al-Qāsim, Abū Zurᶜa in his *Tārīkh* relates that "Ibn al-Musayyab (whom al-Qāsim considered the most knowledgeable of the people of his time after the Companions) kept his *dīwān* with him."

More importantly, neither the overwhelming amount of reports illustrating the practice of writing hadīth notes in the literature, nor the analyses and thematic documentations of the latter scholars such as Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr and al-Khaṭīb on the question of permissiveness are sufficiently taken into account by the Orientalists, as it would disrupt their constructed chronologies[61] although such assumptions far from dampens the stance that the material can be "eloquently contradictory" (Cook).

EMO (5): Mistranslations and misunderstandings. Schoeler's glossary carries the entry "*mukhaḍram:* A poet whose lifetime spanned both [*Jāhiliyya* and Islām],"[62] whereas the *mukhaḍram* is "any non-Companion whose lifetime spanned both *Jāhiliyya* and Islam,"[63] whether a poet, a ḥadīth narrator, or other. Montgomery asserts that "in the Islamic sciences... verifiability was guaranteed by trustworthiness of character... suspect precisely because it was not 'independent'"[64] – presumably referring to ᶜ*adl* and forgetting all about the sine qua non pendant of accuracy *(dabṭ)*. Schoeler couples "*samāᶜ*, audition," with "*qirā'a*, 'recitation,' later also known as *ᶜarḍ*, 'presentation'" and states that Mālik ibn Anas preferred to have his *Muwaṭṭa'* "read to him by his students, *i.e.* he transmitted via *qirā'a*. Sometimes he recited it himself, *i.e.* he transmitted by *samāᶜ*."[65] The term that technically corresponded to *samāᶜ* was never *qirā'a* but ᶜ*arḍ*.

EMO (6): Hubris. Orientalists cast themselves as giants on the shoulders of dwarves, as if they were the real precursors while the Ulema of the past are their apprentices. "Bellamy once made the apt observation that Sezgin's method of *isnād* analysis allowed us to be better informed about an author's ultimate sources than the author himself" (the author here being no less than Ibn Abī al-Dunyā!).[66] Elsewhere, Schoeler writes that the modern Arab editors of *Kitāb al-ᶜAyn* are "not sufficiently familiar both with the characteristic features of the early Arabo-Islamic transmission through lecture courses *and with modern European source-critical methods*."[67]

In two other places, discussing a case of Schacht's "Common Link" (CL) and "Partial Common Link" (PCL) terminology, Schoeler exclaims, "Apparently, al-Dhahabī has here recognized the (P)CL phenomenon!.... In this case as well, al-Dhahabī seems to have recognized the CL phenomenon."[68]

[59]Montgomery in Schoeler (p. 25), quoting Schoeler (p. 120).
[60]See on this our teacher Sajid al-Rahman al-Siddiqi's *Kitābat al-Ḥadīth bi-Aqlām al-Saḥāba* and his forthcoming *Kitābat al-Ḥadīth bi-Aqlām al-Tābiᶜīn* as well as the relevant chapters of al-Ṭaḥāwī's *Sharḥ Maᶜānī al-Āthār*, Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr's *Jāmiᶜ* and al-Khaṭīb's *Taqyīd*.
[61]*E.g.* Cook's "once prevalent opposition," "predominance of oralism," "demise of opposition," "failure to remain oral" in his *Opponents of Writing* and Montgomery's idea of the Qur'ān as having undergone a "shift from *riwāya bil-maᶜnā* to *riwāya bil-lafẓ* as the ᶜUthmānic codex emerged victorious" [!] in Schoeler (p. 20).
[62]Schoeler (p. 166).
[63]Cf. the bilingual edition of our teacher Nūr al-Dīn ᶜItr's *Muᶜjam al-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Ḥadīthiyya*, translated by Denis Gril as *Lexique des termes techniques de la science du Hadith* (p. 91), a work which gives, for each entry, its cross-references in three major manuals of *muṣṭalaḥ*: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *ᶜUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, al-Suyūṭī's *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, and ᶜItr's *Manhaj al-Naqd*. See also al-Khumaysī, *Muᶜjam ᶜUlūm al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī* (p. 204).
[64]In Schoeler (p. 23).
[65]Schoeler (p. 30, 33, cf. p. 42).
[66]Schoeler (p. 40).
[67]Schoeler (p. 162).
[68]Schoeler (p. 136-137).

EMO (7): Wilful misguidance.[69] Orientalists have long since forwarded brash assumptions of inauthenticity and Schoeler is no exception.[70] He entirely dismisses "the question of authenticity" as being "entirely unrelated" to modes of transmission, because, in his view, "obviously, it is as easy to falsify material in writing as it is in oral transmission," footnoting the ultra-Israelist John Wansbrough (who added his own cobwebs to Peter the Venerable's medieval cliché of Islam as a Christian heresy) and comparable authentication-challenged academics Rippin, Cook, and Juynboll.[71]

EMO (8): Endogamy. Schoeler's worldview pits "the European scholars" against the rest of the world. He states: "The evolution of the Qur'ān into a fixed written text – as portrayed by native tradition and considered most likely by most European scholars – took place in several stages."[72] Montgomery's slur in citing the work of one of those "natives" – Azami's *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* as "a thorough rebuttal *from the Muslim perspective*" suggests that Muslimness somehow disqualifies a rebuttal from being thorough in absolute terms.[73] Indeed, lack of serious reference to the works of Hamidullah, Aʿzami, Siddiqui, Gaylani (all four, by the way, Subcontinent scholars), and others[74] in *The Oral and the Written* is baffling, as is Schoeler's and Montgomery's embarrassing, one-sided conception of "scholarly consensus" on various issues.[75]

Nevertheless, on the whole and in the context of Orientalism to this date, Schoeler places the complexity of the material where it belongs, in a reconcilable space – a wise prerequisite toward establishing the full picture. His restrained and analytical treatment of relevant material, attention to detail, and coherent method make *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam* the most authoritative comprehensive work in English to date on aural-literate culture from the late pre-Islamic period to the time of the canonical hadith compilations, and rather refreshing relief from the diehard Schachtianism of Western studies on hadith.

[69]The label "wilful misguidance" is now used by Orientalists themselves about Schacht, as if wilfulness might somehow metamorphose misguidance into scholarliness, cf. Montgomery, introduction to Schoeler (p. 9).

[70]Typically illustrated by his remark that "the extant reports about the first complete compilation or collection of the Qur'ān, undertaken on the order of the first caliph Abū Bakr or his successor ʿUmar may contain a substantial amount of legendary and false material.... the instigator of the collection was either ʿUmar or his daugter Ḥafṣa [!]." Schoeler (p. 74-75). Cf. next note.

[71]Schoeler (p. 41). "Both of us [*i.e.* Cook and Schoeler] operate on the assumption that large amounts of Tradition are likely to be fabricated." Cook, *Opponents* (p. 490 §105). Note the leitmotiv of "easy falsification" over the very issues from which the critical ḥadīth sciences of *jarḥ wal-taʿdīl*, *takhrīj*, *ʿilal*, *rijāl*, etc. have made it even easier to purge falsification.

[72]Schoeler (p. 73).

[73]I have not seen Khalid al-Darīs's *al-ʿUyūb al-Manhajiyya fī Kitābāt al-Mustashriq Shākht (Schacht) al-Mutaʿalliqa bil-Sunnati al-Nabawiyya* (Dār al-Muḥaddith).

[74]I did not see *Tārīkh Tadwīn al-Sunnat al-Nabawiyya wa-Shubuhāt al-Mustashriqīn* by Ḥākim ʿUbaysān al-Ḥumaydī al-Muṭayrī, published in Kuwait.

[75]Cf. Schoeler (p. 197 n. 443) and Montgomery's fantastic rendering of the Muslim position in the following statement: "Western ḥadīth scholarship... has begun from a default position that any given ḥadīth is not only unverifiable but is inauthentic or forged, with the burden of proof being on the establishment of its genuineness (though this is largely presumed to be impossible), whereas Muslim scholars start from the *assumption that any given ḥadīth is verifiable, authentic, and genuine*." In Schoeler (p. 23-24).